



Bone Rattler

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Aboard a British convict ship bound for the New World, Duncan McCallum witnesses a series of murders and seeming suicides among his fellow Scottish prisoners that thrusts him into the bloody maw of the French and Indian War.

As the only man aboard with any medical training, Duncan is ordered to assemble evidence to hold another prisoner accountable for the deaths - or face punishment that will mean his own death. His conclusions suggest that the wave of violence is somehow linked to the "savages" of the American wilderness. Duncan's suspicions that the prison company is to be sacrificed in the war seem to be confirmed when he learns that they are all indentured to Lord Ramsey's estate in the uncharted New York woodlands, a Heart of Darkness where multiple warring factions are engaged in physical, psychological, and spiritual battle.

Following a strange trail of clues that seem half Iroquois and half Highland Scot, mesmerized by the Lord Ramsey's beautiful daughter, and frequently defying death in a dangerous wilderness populated by grizzled European settlers, mysterious scalping parties, and Indian sorcerers, Duncan McCallum, exiled chief of his near-extinct clan, finds the source of all evil at the site of an Indian massacre.

Bone Rattler Details

Date : Published December 1st 2007 by Counterpoint LLC

ISBN : 9781593761851

Author : Eliot Pattison

Format : Hardcover 456 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Mystery, Fiction, Historical Mystery

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From Reader Review Bone Rattler for online ebook

Kelly says

Bone Rattler is the first book I have ever read by Eliot Pattison. It is the first book in his "A Mystery of Colonial America" series. I enjoyed the story, but sometimes found it hard to follow the mystery of the mysterious young woman. However, I not only stuck with this book to the end, I went on to read the rest of the three-book series, and highly recommend this series. I cannot wait to get my hands on more books by Eliot Pattison.

Meredith says

I started this book because it was free for the Kindle from Amazon, it said "Bone" in the title, and it is historical fiction. I stayed up all night finishing it last night because it was AWESOME! If you decide to read this, just be prepared to spend the first 1/3 of the book totally lost (as is your narrator), the second 1/3 of the book only mostly lost (as the narrator starts to figure out what is going on but doesn't completely clue you in), and the last 1/3 of the book thinking you know what is going on only to have it completely flipped in the last few pages. It is a murder mystery, a story of Scottish and Native American struggles, full of fear, hatred, and at times, even hope. And now I see that it is the first in a series. Sign me up for number two!

Beth says

While I could not get into Skull Mantra I got quickly sucked into this one set in early Colonial America with the hero a Scot transported overseas during the French and Indian wars. As one reviewer noted, it is a dense read - which for me means you cannot skim or you'll miss plot points. I sometimes had trouble keeping the various factions (Native Americans for the British or French, rangers v. soldiers, keepers, prisoners, ect.) straight. Also you are dropped directly into the action without any explanation so you need to keep reading even if you do not understand the story - it will come together.

Dale says

This book felt too much like the Shan stories set in Tibet. But one thing you can be assured of is that Pattison will have done his research. This is a story set in Colonial America and has very interesting protagonists. Many of the characters are very interesting and have great depth. The story definitely kept my attention and gave me a lot to think about. If you haven't read any of the Tibetan stories, I think you will really like the twists and turns the story takes. If you have read them, you will probably recognize many of the twists but you will still enjoy the story.

Stephanie says

This was the story of a Scot named Duncan McCallum who has been sent to the Colonies as a prisoner of the English. His clan was decimated at Culloden while he was away at school and he and his younger brother Jamie are the only surviving members of Clan McCallum. Jamie is a soldier in the English army and already in America. Duncan plans to meet up with his at some point in the future and hopes to start over in America after his prison sentence is over. Things change radically for Duncan while aboard the ship that will take him to his new home. The new tutor for Lord Ramsey's children is murdered and one of the fellow prisoners, Adam, commits suicide by throwing himself overboard. Then the entire crew is terrified when the remains of a Native American ritual are found in the navigation room aboard ship. Duncan has medical training and is asked to investigate the deaths in order to present a proper report to Lord Ramsey, the patron of this ship, once they arrive in America.

I am having a hard time relating the gist of the story because it was extremely disjointed with only a brief explanation of why Duncan is even there and who the characters are on the ship. When they got to America I had a very hard time relating to Duncan, who at times seemed to be such a wimp and at other times was brave beyond his calling. There was way too much going on, the setting didn't match the mood in some places and there were some events that were left unexplained. In spite of all this messiness, I did like the story once we got the REAL story, of how Sarah was "rescued" and the English plot to get more land back from the settlers. The Indian involvement with the war between the English and the French was very interesting. I will probably try another Pattison and see if it's any smoother.

Wanda says

16 NOV 2013 -- WOW! What a beginning. Having read and enjoyed The Skull Mantra, this author's Tibet detective series, I stumbled across this three-part American History series and fell right in. The Seven Years' War is a fascinating part of history. I am glad of the opportunity to learn a bit more. Here goes ...

21 NOV 2013 -- a fantastic read about what took place in America between the Pilgrims and the Revolutionary War. This book is fantastic and I am definitely going to download the next two in the series.

Sophie says

I read this because I recently read all of Eliot Pattison Inspector Shan novels and had fallen in love with Pattison's writing.

Bone Rattler is the first of a new series of historical novels set in 1759. The main character is Duncan McCallum, a Scottish prisoner on his way to America, who soon finds himself in the middle of the battle between the English, the French and the Native Americans - all while he has to try to find a way to clear his friend from a murder charge.

I didn't like this as much as the Shan novels, for several reasons.

First of all, the parallels between Duncan McCallum and Shan are a little too many and too obvious. It's not simply the fact that Shan and Duncan are both in between worlds - Shan between the Chinese and the Tibetans, Duncan between the British and the Natives - that alone probably wouldn't have bothered me. It's the many smallish similarities, like this one: When Shan first arrives at the labor camp, he is beaten by a

guard until an old Tibetan monk lies on top of him to receive the blows in his stead. When Duncan is about to be whipped to death, an old sailor ends up lying for him and receiving the blows in his stead. There are a few more examples like this that make it appear like Pattison copied from himself a fair bit.

But while there are a lot of similarities between their characters, I found Duncan nowhere near as likable as Shan. It's not that I didn't like him, but with Shan I knew I would love him pretty much from page one, while with Duncan I'm still not entirely sure after 500 pages.

Then there's the rather convoluted plot. The story takes quite a while to really get going - I thought the stuff on the ship dragged on way too long, but once they're off the ship it gets better. But it's all a little confusing, something I often noticed with the Shan books as well, but there it didn't bother me as much because of my love for the characters. I found that once we get to know some of the characters a little better (like Woolford), the book became a lot more gripping. And once Conawago appeared, I was sold - again the parallels to the Shan novels are obvious (Shan and Lokesh = Duncan and Conawago), but since this was my favorite aspect of the Shan novels, you won't find me complaining.

And despite my complaints, I'm still tempted to give this four stars. I'll keep it at three, because the plot was too much all over the place to my liking, but I want to give credit where credit is due: Pattison is really great at describing things like other people's (and other cultures') customs. He manages to fill those scenes (like when Conawago teaches Duncan to pray to a tree) with so much life, and he writes with so much respect it's just wonderful to read. Scenes like these are the reasons why I love his writing, so I don't mind if the rest isn't perfect.

What's also interesting about the setting is that as a reader you know so much more than Duncan at times that it can be a little frustrating. Because you know that the Native Americans aren't barbarians, you know that the white settlers that had been abducted and then returned to "civilization" aren't traumatized. You know how the battle is going to end. Especially the latter piece of knowledge made it a little difficult to read on for me at times, because, well. It's just sad.

So yes, this book isn't perfect, but Pattison's strengths are the same: he manages to capture the customs of different times and different cultures wonderfully, and he manages to show places where these cultures have met and can meet. I'm going to read the next book in this series and everything else I can find by him.

Jacqie says

Eliot Pattison is a sensitive writer who richly depicts the culture of the American colonial era and takes a good stab at some of the eastern Native American cultures of the times too. His main character is in an almost impossible situation as an indentured servant who is required to inform upon his fellow Scots prisoners.

Downsides to the book: I really wanted to become immersed in the time period that Pattison so richly describes, but the book was often confusing. Questions were evaded and never answered (this drives me crazy), there were a huge amount of factions among the British, the Scots, and the Natives and it was hard for me to keep track of who was after who. I would probably have enjoyed the book more if it had been

written as a straight historical piece without the mystery part of it.

Barb in Maryland says

Marvelous mystery set in 'Last of the Mohicans' territory.

ETA: 7/20/18 Re-re-read with great enjoyment. Highly recommended for US/Canadian history buffs, who enjoy a good mystery. The author not only knows his subject matter, he's also a great story-teller.

Fran says

When one man decides to help his family he is penalized quite harshly. Even though he studied to become a doctor he would never see the light of day to complete his schooling. Because of his actions in trying to hide a family member from harm Duncan McCallum a High Scot, is placed in a prison, beaten at times that his skin is rare, and then sent on a voyage to Colonial America as an Indentured Servant to the Ramsey Company. But, there is much to tell before this as many of his comrades or fellow prisoners die along the way from what appears to be suicides but are they really. Many appear to be jumping overboard, others fall prey to some strange illness and all succumb to something eventually as the brutal treatment they receive is graphically described by outstanding author Elliott Paterson in his novel Bone Rattlers the first in the Duncan McCallum mystery series.

Before a close friend dies he placed a black stone in Duncan's hand. As things progressed on the ship he realized that something odd was happening. The Captain requested that he tell the crew that nothing bad happened to those that died and that they had nothing to fear. But, strange visions entered his mind, he saw a woman's ghostly figure, the faces of those who died and Duncan felt himself dragged overboard was it all a nightmare or what was really happening to him. One of the keepers on the boat, Lister discussed his past, his reason for being imprisoned and made his promise to uphold the right of his clan as the new head. Watching the tutor to the Ramsey children murdered on board this horrific ship, Duncan has no choice but to fill the position after receiving this black stone from his friend Adam with strange engravings and carvings on it as a warning from the tutor from the beyond in the form of cryptic messages.

Before landing in the New World Duncan and one of the keepers Lister recount their pasts when their lives were better in order to survive the horrors that would come. Seeing an unknown woman in white in his dreams, fearing that he has been thrown overboard and then experiencing the initial ceremony of being the highest in his clan in his cell really brings to light the atrocities faced by many prisoners, the indignities of the time and the fact that he was wrongly accused as well as so many others without the right to speak out and defend themselves.

Dictatorships were present even in Colonial Times and the true colors of this Ramsey Company will startle the reader and give you an inside picture of what went on even back then. Many people in charge want to control the words and actions of those they feel are their subjects. Pitting different groups against each other is what Lord Ramsey has in mind as I continue my review of bestselling author Elliott Patterson's novel Bone Rattler.

Duncan has to make the ultimate decision that would decide his fate. Realizing that Professor Evering was murdered and convincing those in charge of the fact, he is presented with an alternative to serving hard labor. Seven years as an indentured servant and tutor to the Lord's children plus giving lessons to others on the weekend. The Vicar and Arnold present him with the documents that would free him from the Captain's wrath but he would have to investigate the murder and bring them the killer. Duncan wants no part of being an informer so the decision will not come quickly and his answer will depend on what else they expect from him.

From the start the author grabs the reader and holds his/her interest as you learn about the past, build in ideas for the present and learn about more about both France and England, their relationship with the Indians and how they interacted with the Huron and Iroquois tribes. All Duncan is guilty of is helping an older relative. A conscripted Scots Highlander trying to honor his heritage. Duncan is a physician and political renegade. Can he solve the murder aboard the ship? At times you can smell the dank and putrid air on the ship, feel the lashes as they are inflicted on the prisoners and understand the hate that flows within the veins of the prisoners most of whom are wrongly incarcerated.

The life of one man is described as he tries to find the answers to a murder and hope for his future. One group trying to take over and rule the land and the people any way they can regardless of cost and others trying to remain true to their ways and the past. What will happen?

The ritual in the compass room defines the entire outcome. The objects found center around a murder not a suicide. What Evering planned never came to pass. Gathered the objects- 2 sets of bones- 2 deaths: his and his wives. The eye of the shark stands for evil and the claw the agony and pain that he felt. The feather tells of meeting his wife in heaven and the salt purification and the metal or buckle to fight the demons. As the author through Duncan explains that Evering did not complete the ritual another did. Two separate worlds and two separate halves. The objects held within them the truth. The compass room the tobacco leaves that burned signifying the People of the Forest and contacting his wife in the hereafter. As Duncan is placed in his cell with quill and paper he does not begin transcribing the letters but creates his own family tree of his clan. Adam Munroe was killed for a reason and so much Evering. Adam placed himself in slavery why? What is the significance of the black stone and what did his final words to him mean?

The book is replete with history relating to the forest lore of the Indians and the ancient lore of the Scottish Highlanders whose pasts connect yet are so opposite and different. The past has its secrets and values and the New World does too. Human cargo. History and the anthropology of the Indians and the beliefs run high throughout the novel.

Entering the New World should have been a better experience for Duncan. Learning the truth behind his release from the prison was enlightening and disheartening. Finding out the connection between Evering and one of the Ramsey children started a chain of events that would change what he set out to do. One Major named Pike who was out for revenge against him but was it Duncan he was really after? After all he endured he realized that he could endure the years of indenture if the end result would change things in his life and others close to him. The war is fought to restrain the Indians in the forest. Truths behind the actions of one Ramsey child revealed.

There are many different factions featured in this novel. The French and the English are at odds and their beliefs so different. Each of the races vying to rule and many using cruel and inhumane ways to take control for the King and some who believe that the colonies belong to them. The links begin to form as he encounters many who would tell him why they are after him, what the Indians want and the ties with Evering.

Iroquois vs. Hurons vs. the English and who the land belongs to. Raids, murders, killings and why? Searching for his missing brother that was at the root of much of his misery and with the aid of those who had held him captive would the truth come out about the murders and much more? Iroquois's do not want change and they want the old ways to remain. One young girl is kidnapped and the father offers a heavy reward to anyone that finds her. In exchange for finding his daughter Ramsey offers land if she is returned and parchment they stole from his office.

Six volunteers. Who would serve in this troop? Duncan has been chosen to join in the search but many obstacles come his way and then he encounters an Indian named Conawago and things change. Recalling an old friend named Jacob the Fish, dealing with the storm and hoping to find Sarah, he tells him that he was in the Ramsey Company. A friendship and strange alliance formed as Conawago wanted to know more about Duncan.

As the journey to find Sarah continues you learn who is to be trusted, many truths about the Ramsey Company and just how this father felt about finding his daughter. Sarah, mysterious and beautiful, the British military officer, and English Vicar, several lieutenants, majors and many Indians and one Scot named Duncan in the center of it all. Just why are there so many deaths and how are they linked to the French and Indian War? Added to the mix is Duncan's brother who has disappeared from the military. An ending that will definitely tie it all together and one man named Duncan be in the center of it. Just who was behind the murders, who committed them and what was the reason for so much hate and destruction? What was found hidden and not supposed to be found? Read this novel and find out for yourself. Will freedom ever ring for Duncan? What happens to the Ramsey children and who will finally decipher the sign of the forest? An ending that will definitely surprise the reader and one young girl who would change everything.

Betrayals, deceit, murder, wars, raids, uncovered treasure and a mystery that will take you back in time and one you will never forget. Eliot Patterson delivers again and we know there is much more in store for Duncan, his clan and his family in the future. Characters so diverse and different and yet bold, daring and unique. Once again Eliot Patterson has penned a five star novel.

Fran Lewis: reviewer

Kate says

Bone Rattler is a book about the early settlement of the United States. It invokes a time when Native Americans were mysterious and feared, New World settlers were often killed by enemy tribes, the French were out to get the English with alliance tribes, and Scotland natives were persecuted and forced to hide their heritage if they wanted to survive. Pattison does a remarkable job at painting the picture of this world and contrasting the relationships between the Scots and the Native Americans- both persecuted, not understood, and often wiped out completely without reason. It made for a good read, although the beginning was fairly slow. I think Pattison could have done a better job building his characters in the first few chapters- it isn't

until they reach the New World that you really start to understand who the characters are and what is happening, because at first, you're thrown into their world on a ship and it isn't clear what is going on. Overall, this was a great book, especially the middle and the end.

Alcornell says

This guy can really write. That said, this novel was not an easy read. The language was unfamiliar, the ideas even more so. There was too much taken for granted which left me out in the beginning. I had to look up words, re-read passages, go back to figure out who certain people were again, etc. This made it slow, if not tedious. But I was curious...."what the heck happened here??" This made reading the book challenging to say the least. There was no denying the darkness of the tale was compelling, the texture and sense of time and place was captivating. The story became less murky as the author untangled it bit by bit, and in the end there is finally some light and dappled shadow. This book introduced me to some American pre-revolutionary history to which I'd never been exposed, and gave me a hint of the culture of early native-Americans peoples who faced their own doom at the beginning of the anglo-American story. I became "involved" regardless of how difficult the beginning was; in the end I felt enlightened about some of the lesser-known complications of historical events. I cared about the protagonists, and for the unknown "real" people who lived through those early times. As an American descendent of Scots who settled in America during this earliest period, this story spoke to me in surprising ways. It was eye-opening, frightening, saddening, infuriating, riveting.

When I finished this book, after 2 months of working my way through it slowly, I moved to Mr. Pattison's earlier book, *The Skull Mantra*, and found again...a mystery that I have to have solved, and a story that is hard to understand for its unfamiliarity. Is all this effort worth it? I don't care. The stories are gripping and that is plenty.

Derek says

I had a lot of trouble with this, and nearly gave up on it.

In short, there's a lot of racism, and I'm not entirely convinced it's all the racism of the characters. The protagonist, Duncan McCallum, is a convict transported from Britain to the New York colony in 1759, and he has the prejudices one might expect of someone completely unfamiliar with the American natives. But as his vision is expanded and he learns how little he originally knew, there's too much of the "noble savage" in the natives he later meets (and for that matter in the only black character) for me to be comfortable.

Also, Pattison seems to know a lot about Tibetan culture and as much as one might expect of an American about American history and culture, but I have a really hard time believing his English characters...

Bap says

scotland you say? The story is about a group of Scottish convicts brought to New York and thrown into the maw of the french and indian war where brutality meets brutality in the wilderness of upstate New York where the scots have much in common with the Iroquious, two imperiled tribal groups. Add mystery to the mix and it is a good read.

Jenny says

WOW. This was such an engaging book. The subject and setting was different to other historical mysteries I have read. It's so welcoming to find a fresh idea!

As another reviewer said, it's not an easy book to follow - you have to pay close attention. If I was reading an actual book I would have turned down the corners of pages where clues were discovered so that I could go back and reread passages. I read this on my Kindle and I am sure it has the capability to mark passages but I was too far in to the story before I thought about doing it and it would have been too hard to go back

Also, it was good to read a Kindle book that didn't suffer from any formatting problems that seem to plague some publications. I didn't notice a single error, which is more than can be said for many printed books these days.

I have already ordered the next book in the series and look forward to reading more by this author. I might even give his other series a try.

Highly Recommended

MBP says

The author does a great job creating a "Heart of Darkness" atmosphere in the wilderness of upstate New York in the 1750's. Also a great exploration of racial, ethnic and class differences that goes far beyond the obvious Europeans vs. Native Americans. An author's note and timeline in the back of the book give additional historical information. It made me want to read more about the history of this period, and more about Duncan MacCallum and Sarah Ramsey!

Charlie says

Scottish Highlanders and Hurons in the 1750s had a bond few understood. Highlanders brought here on British prison ships were slated to lives of slaves or indentured servants or face the gallows in England. either way they faced almost certain death in the New World. With all the alliances and intrigue of unprincipled landgrabbers with grants from the King. Many escaped their fates and enjoyed a better one with the Hurons. Their spiritual beliefs and warrior cultures were remarkably similar, and other colonist marveled that the two cultures blended so readily. The only other group survived going into the endless woods to settle in the wilds and prosper (not one was ever killed by the "savages") were the Moravian Missions. This book is a murder mystery, officially, and very complex, but I learned a lot about the politics and businesses of the

day, and the cultures of the Iroquois and Hurons. At 453 pp it was a pretty fast read.

Jeffrey Keeten says

”Ye’ll never have their world. But ye’ll always have their name.”

The Jacobite rebellion in 1745 was decisively put down by English forces at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. The Scottish had rebelled many times throughout the history of the British Isles. Any time an English king was distracted elsewhere, the Scots generally took advantage to try and win their independence or at the very least harass the English who chose to live too close to the Scottish border.

The 1745 rebellion was different than those that came before. The English were not content with just winning the war and sending Bonnie Prince Charlie scurrying out of the country once again. They wanted, once and for all, to destroy Scottish culture and force these heathens to be English. They banned the kilt. They banned the bagpipes. The reprisals were harsh, and many families were nearly wiped out. Jacobites were deported to America to serve out seven years of indentureship. Arriving on these foreign shores was as perplexing for these lads as if they had landed on the moon.

Duncan McCallum and his brother Jamie are not only the last of their family, but nearly the last of their clan. When their fathers and uncles are hung at Culloden, Duncan becomes chieftain of a clan of ghosts. The only reason that Duncan and Jamie survive is because they are away to school in London.

Duncan keeps a list of his ancestors on a piece of parchment, and when he feels most disheartened, he reads them out loud to keep them alive in his memories.

When a great uncle, he must have thought was dead, stumbles onto his doorstep, he makes the only decision that he can. He hides him from the authorities. When he is betrayed, his 80 year old uncle is hanged, and Duncan finds himself on a ship to Edentown, NY, where a metal collar will be fastened around his neck for seven years. He has become the property of the Ramsey family.

Go West, lad, under the shadow of the whip or hang.

The tutor of the Ramsey children is murdered on the ship while still at sea. Duncan is tasked with finding his killer, otherwise it will be pinned on one of the indentured Scots in the hold. Little does he know, this will be a mystery that will follow him onto land and deep into the forests. The Scottish people believe many mystical things; some might call them superstitions. This belief in intangible things, beings that exist beyond science or reason, has prepared Duncan better than most for the strange occurrences he is going to experience in the new world.

”The demon wore a black sleeveless waistcoat, out of which arms made of sticks extended. In the twigs of one hand hung a gold watch, its chain linked through a buttonhole to a familiar gold fob, in the shape of a tiny book. In the other twig hand was the skull of a small bird; a paper had been rolled through its eyes. Around the thing’s shoulder hung the skin of a snake.”

Not exactly subtle, but of course everything is so carefully arranged on this demon scarecrow as if it is a medieval portrait rife with symbolism. The mystical elements of the book come fast and furious as Duncan tries to unravel the many times obscure utterances of a local shaman named Conawago. Couple this with the,

at times, baffling forest lore of Captain Woolford, who was one of the famed rangers, and you begin to understand that Duncan's confusion is also shared by the reader. These rangers are precursors to the current Army Rangers, who are still being trained in many of the methods first learned in the 1700s. Needless to say, Duncan's head is reeling from all that he has to process. There are sacred trees that make you tell the truth. There are ancient customs that are bound up with respecting the earth and the animals who tread upon it. As the rich culture of his clan is being eradicated, he is learning the culture of the New World.

There is also a lot of hair raising talk about finding your true skin, which certainly resonates with me. **"Take the skin you are, she had said."** Wise words from Sarah, the oldest daughter of the Ramsey family, who has become a ghostwalker, caught between two worlds, after being taken and living with the American Indians for several years. These reclaimed whites can never truly belong again to either culture.

Sarah's suffering comes from her association with reds and whites, and while her sanity drifts about in the cross winds of her memories, she emerges as not only the most interesting character in the novel, but also the toughest. **"The world,' she whispered. 'So many people without true skins.'"**

That is something I need to work on... taking the skin of who I really am.

This novel is not easy to read. Eliot Pattison was flinging so many unfamiliar concepts at me that my mind struggled to tie it all together. I had to go back and reread passages and ponder them before being able to continue. I felt the excitement, though, of experiencing concepts that were never practiced by my ancestors, or if they were, those mystical beliefs lay long buried in the graves of my progenitors. These mystical beliefs, that existed before "civilization" and "religion" labelled them superstitions and made us embarrassed to know them, have been nearly lost. Some of these old beliefs have survived through folk tales that only toothless ancients can bring to life.

I was struck by how much we lose with every generation as we become more homogenized into one culture and shrug off the unique aspects that tie us to our ancestors. I would encourage everyone to learn where your people come from and find out as much as you can about what your people believed. Maybe you can find pieces of that lore that can apply to your modern life. Bringing the past into the present will help everyone make better decisions about the future.

"I, for one, have always been more interested in those explorers who went into the wilderness and decided not to return."

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I also have a Facebook blogger page at: <https://www.facebook.com/JeffreyKeeten>

Phair says

I was excited to find a historical mystery set during the F&I War but this was rather disappointing: too dense with detail to be a pleasant mystery read and it did not give me the feeling of the times & the war that I had hoped for. Did like the info about the Scottish removals and the way the dispossessed clansmen had an affinity for Indian ways that made the British uneasy. Also lots of interesting Indian pov and lore. Overall the book seemed scattershot as if the author tried to include too much. The ending left the way open for further adventures/mysteries for Duncan.

Jery says

I really desperately wanted to like this book, but it was just too convoluted, overwrought, and nearly boring. I have never in my life read all but the last 50 pages of a book and then quit! Till this one, that is. Here is the Publisher's Weekly review so you know what it is about:

"It's the mid-18th century, and young Highland Scot Duncan McCallum is on a convict ship bound for the New World. Most of his family has been slaughtered, and he's having a hard time with the yoke of British oppression himself. He witnesses a series of murders and suicides among his fellow passengers, and goes diving into the Atlantic to save another. When he reaches New York he finds the French and Indian War in full swing, and his troubles really begin.

Once indentured to empire builder Lord Ramsey as a tutor to his children and connected to his utopian community in the Hudson Valley, Duncan scrambles to understand both his new setting and the continuing series of murders that follow in his wake. The conflicts among armies both private and government-backed, allies and enemies among the Huron, the French and members of the Iroquois Confederacy, and the knowledge that his soldier brother has become a renegade, make a mix to try his soul.

A string of dead people haunts the story, at times seeming more alive than the survivors. Also hauntingly beautiful are the bonds between the cultures of the Scots Highlanders and the Indians, both "true skin" peoples. Dark, complex and compelling in mystery, historical, and spiritual considerations, the reader wonders along with Duncan whether the New World will see oppression extended or explode in a new burst of freedom. "

I have heard his other novels are better, but sad to say I just can't recommend this one.
